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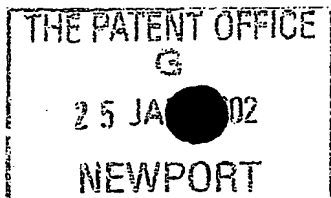
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25 JAN 2002 E69 794-1 C5 342
P017 7700 0.00-0201677.2

Request for grant of a patent

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The Patent Office

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1. Your Reference	CGP/PG4657		
2. Patent application number (The Patent office will fill in this part)	0201677.2		25 JAN 2002
3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)	GLAXO GROUP LIMITED GLAXO WELLCOME HOUSE BERKELEY AVENUE GREENFORD MIDDLESEX UB6 ONN UNITED KINGDOM Patents ADP number (if you know it) 473587003 If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its corporation		
4. Title of the invention	MEDICAMENT DISPENSER		
5. Name of your agent (if you have one)	DR CHRISTOPHER GERARD PIKE		
"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)	PIKE & CO. HAYES LOFT 68A HAYES PLACE MARLOW BUCKS SL7 2BT Patents ADP number (if you know it) 6552335002		
6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number	Country	Priority application number (if you know it)	Date of Filing (day / month / year)
7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application	Number of earlier application		Date of filing (day / month / year)
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Description 43

Claim(s) 4

Abstract 1

Drawing(s) 7 *47* *66*

10. If you are also filing any of the following,
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Priority Documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right
to grant of a patent (*Patents Form 7/77*)Request for preliminary examination
and search (*Patent Form 9/77*)Request for substantive examination
(*Patent Form 10/77*)Any other documents
(*please specify*)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application


Signature Christopher Gerard Pike
AGENT FOR THE APPLICANTS

24 January 2002

12. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom

Dr. Christopher G. Pike
01628 471869

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Notes

Medicament dispenser

Technical field

5

The present invention relates to a medicament dispenser for dispensing medicament. The invention particularly relates to a device for use in dispensing medicament in powder or tablet form.

10

Background to the invention

The use of inhalation devices in the administration of medicaments, for example in bronchodilation therapy is well known. Such devices generally comprise a body or housing within which a medicament carrier is located. Known inhalation devices
15 include those in which the medicament carrier is a blister strip containing a number of discrete doses of powdered medicament. Such devices usually contain a mechanism of accessing these doses, usually comprising either piercing means or means to peel a lid sheet away from a base sheet. The powdered medicament can then be accessed and inhaled. Such a mechanism may also be used for dispensing
20 medicament in tablet form wherein peeling away the lid sheet from the base sheet reveals a tablet for removal and subsequent consumption.

Therapies involving combinations of different and complementary active medicaments are known. These can be administered either as distinct combination
25 (i.e. multi-active) medicament products, which comprise a defined mixture of each component medicament, or as groups of single active medicament products, which are designed to be taken in combination or sequentially. Whilst combination products offer added convenience for the patient, certain medicament actives are difficult to formulate as distinct combination products. For example, the actives may interact
30 chemically with each other in an undesirable way when formulated together.

~~It is thus, desirable in certain circumstances, to have a medicament dispenser that~~
separately (i.e. in isolated fashion) contains each active component of a combination
product, but which enables the delivery of a combined dose in response to a
minimum number of patient actions. In particular, it is desirable that each active
5 component of the combined dose is delivered to the patient in a single, combined
dose in response to a single patient dosing action. For example, it is desirable that a
combination inhaled product be delivered in response to a single patient actuation of
an inhaler, even where the active components of that combined product are
separately stored within the inhaler device.

10

The Applicants have now found that a particularly effective way to meet the above
described desiderata is provided by a medicament dispenser which comprises plural,
separate elongate form medicament carriers (e.g. blister strips), each containing in
isolated fashion, a different medicament active, wherein the dispenser enables
15 coupled release of each medicament active from each separate blister strip to
provide a combined dose for administration to a patient.

Summary of the invention

20

According to one aspect of the invention there is provided a medicament dispenser
for use with plural elongate form medicament carriers, each having multiple distinct
medicament dose portions carried thereby, said dispenser having an internal
mechanism for dispensing the distinct medicament dose portions carried by each of
25 said plural medicament carriers, said mechanism comprising,

- a) receiving means for receiving each of the plural medicament carriers;
- b) release means for releasing a distinct medicament dose portion from each of
30 the plural medicament carriers on receipt thereof by said receiving means;

c) an outlet, positioned to be in communication with the distinct medicament dose portions releasable by said release means; and

d) indexing means for individually indexing the distinct medicament dose
5 portions of each of the plural medicament carriers.

In combination, the distinct medicament dose portions releasable from each of the plural medicament carriers comprise a defined dose of combination product. That is to say, that when combined together the distinct active medicament dose portions
10 form a single dose of a 'multi-active' medicament treatment.

The medicament dispenser is designed to receive plural elongate form medicament carriers. Preferably, it is designed to receive two such elongate form medicament carriers. Suitably, each elongate form medicament carrier is in the form of a strip or
15 tape. The term medicament carrier is used to define any suitable carrier. In a preferred aspect, the carrier has a blister pack form, but it could also, for example, comprise a carrier onto which medicament has been applied by any suitable process including printing, painting and vacuum occlusion.

20 Each medicament carrier has multiple distinct (i.e. separate) medicament dose portions carried thereby. The term 'dose portion' is employed because in the context of the invention the distinct 'portions' are brought together to form a combination (i.e. multi-active) product dose.

25 The dispenser has an internal mechanism for dispensing the distinct medicament dose portions carried by each of said plural medicament carriers for administration as a single, combination product dose by the patient.

The mechanism comprises receiving means for receiving each of the plural
30 medicament carriers. Embodiments are envisaged both in which there is a single receiving station which is capable of receiving plural medicament carriers and in

~~which each medicament carrier is received by a distinct (i.e. individual) receiving station.~~ In the latter case, the individual receiving stations may either be coupled or not.

5 The mechanism further comprises release means for releasing a distinct medicament dose portion from each of the plural medicament carriers on its receipt by the receiving station. The release means can have any suitable form. Where the elongate carrier is in the form of a blister strip, the release means may for example, be a means to rupture or otherwise access the blister. In a particular preferred
10 aspect, where the blister strip is peelably accessible, the release means comprises means for peeling apart the blister strip.

An outlet is positioned to be in communication with the distinct medicament dose portions releasable by said release means. The outlet may have any suitable form.
15 In one aspect, it has the form of a mouthpiece and in another, it has the form of a nozzle for insertion into the nasal cavity of a patient.

The outlet is preferably a single outlet, which communicates with the distinct medicament dose portions releasable by said release means via a common air
20 channelling means (e.g. formed as an air-pipe or common manifold). The patient may therefore breathe in through a single outlet, and that breath be transferred through the common channelling means to (all of) the released medicament dose portions, thereby enabling their inhalation as a combined product. The outlet and/or channelling device may be shaped to encourage mixing of drug as a result of the air
25 flow created by inhalation by the patient. For example, baffles or other mechanical aids to mixing may be incorporated. Venturi channelling of the air flow is also envisaged in embodiments. Helical form channels are envisaged.

The mechanism also comprises indexing means for individually indexing the distinct
30 medicament dose portions of each of the plural medicament carriers. Said indexing

typically happens in sequential fashion, for example accessing dose portions sequentially arranged along the length of the elongate carrier.

Any or all components of the internal mechanism may be driven by either an
5 electronic or mechanical drive system or combination thereof.

Suitably electronic drive means typically comprise a motor, preferably an electrically-powered motor. The motor may provide linear or rotary drive, but in general, rotary motors are most suitable. The motor may for example, comprise a DC electric motor,
10 a piezoelectric (PZ) motor, an ultrasonic motor, a solenoid motor or a linear motor. Preferably, the electronic drive system comprises a DC motor, a PZ motor or an ultrasonic motor.

The use of ultrasonic motors is particularly preferred since they offer advantages
15 over conventional motors in terms of weight, size, noise, cost and torque generated. Ultrasonic motors are well known in the art and are commercially available (e.g. BMSTU Technological Cooperation Centre Ltd, Moscow, Russia; Shinsei Corporation, Tokyo, Japan).

20 Ultrasonic motors do not use coils or magnets but comprise a piezo-electric ceramic stator which drives a coupled rotor. The stator generates ultrasonic vibrations which in turn causes rotation of the rotor. While regular DC motors are characterised by high speed and low torque, requiring reduction gearing to increase torque, ultrasonic motors attain low speed and high torque, thus eliminating the need for reduction
25 gearing. Furthermore, these motors are lightweight and compact, lacking coils and magnets, and are noiseless as the ultrasonic frequencies used are not audible to the human ear.

Suitably, the dispenser further comprises actuating means for actuating said
30 electronic drive system. Said actuating means may take the form of a switch, push-button, or lever.

In a preferred aspect, the medicament carrier comprises a peelable blister strip having a plurality of pockets for containing medicament wherein said pockets are spaced along the length of and defined between two peelable sheets secured to
 5 each other. The respective peelable sheets are generally in the form of a base sheet and a lid sheet of a pocket. In this aspect, the release means comprises peeling means for peeling apart a base sheet and lid sheet to open a pocket. Suitably, the peeling means includes lid driving means for pulling apart a lid sheet and a base sheet of a pocket that has been received at the opening station.

10

In a preferred aspect, there is provided a medicament dispenser for use with plural blister strip form medicament carriers, having multiple distinct pockets for containing medicament dose portions, wherein said pockets are spaced along the length of and defined between two peelable sheets secured to each other, said dispenser having
 15 an internal mechanism for dispensing the medicament dose portions contained within said plural medicament carriers, said mechanism comprising,

- a) an opening station for receiving a pocket of each of said medicament carriers;
- 20 b) peeling means positioned to engage a base sheet and a lid sheet of a pocket which has been received in said opening station for peeling apart such a base sheet and lid sheet, to open such a pocket, said peeling means including lid driving means for pulling apart a lid sheet and a base sheet of a pocket that has been received at said opening station;
- 25 c) an outlet, positioned to be in communication with an opened pocket through which a user can access a medicament dose portion from such an opened pocket; and
- 30 d) indexing means for individually indexing the distinct pockets of each of the plural medicament carriers.

Suitably, the indexing means comprises a rotatable index wheel having recesses therein, said index wheel being engageable with a medicament carrier in use with said medicament dispenser such that said recesses each receive a respective
5 pocket of the base sheet of a blister strip in use with said medicament dispenser.

Suitably, the rotatable index wheel additionally comprises a series of indentations located at its base and spaced in between the recesses.

10 Suitably, the indexing means additionally comprises an interlock coupling to couple actuation of the dispenser to the index wheel. The interlock coupling reversibly locks the index wheel in place. Preferably, said interlock coupling comprises a foot portion having a toe and a heel, and a tail section. Preferably, said interlock coupling is pivotally mountable to the dispenser at its foot portion. Preferably, said toe fits into
15 one of the indentations on the rotatable index wheel. Preferably, the interlock coupling is sprung to bias it towards location of the toe in one of the indentations.

Alternatively, the indexing means comprises a gear and sprocket wherein teeth on the wheel fit into apertures or holes formed on one or both edges of a medicament
20 carrier. The mechanism therefore resembles that of photographic film being advanced through a camera.

Alternatively, the indexing means comprises an index ratchet which is moveable between a locked position whereby said ratchet engages a pocket on said
25 medicament carrier and prevents further peeling thereof, and a release position allowing free movement of said medicament carrier. In this embodiment, actuation of said medicament dispenser actuates said lid driving means and releases said index ratchet from a medicament carrier to allow peeling thereof.

30 Suitably, said lid driving means comprises a wheel on which the lid sheet is wound up, said wheel having a winding surface which decreases in diameter when tension

in the lid sheet increases. Preferably, said wheel comprises a plurality of resiliently flexible arms each extending therefrom at an angle with respect to a radius. The leading end of the lid sheet is looped over one of said resiliently flexible arms to secure the lid sheet to the wheel initially.

5

In one aspect, the lid driving means comprise a mangle. The lid sheet passes through two rotating wheels which act as a mangle and is gripped at the point of contact with the wheels. The used portion of the lid sheet is collected in a chamber after it has passed through the mangle.

10

In another aspect, the lid driving means comprise a roller. Preferably said roller is composed of a polymeric rubber and is positioned next to a guide wall. Preferably said roller has a smooth surface. Alternatively said roller has a knurled surface. The roller grips the lid sheet as it passes from the point at which it is separated from the base sheet through the space between the roller and the guide wall and the used portion of the lid sheet is then collected in a chamber. The roller has the advantage over the mangle described above in that a greater degree of contact between the roller wheel and the lid sheet occurs- the lid sheet is squeezed through the roller and may pass around about 1/3 of the roller wheel. This provides a higher level of grip and pulling force than with a mangle. The force required to turn the roller is constant throughout the use of the device and does not vary according to how much of the lid sheet has been peeled away from the base sheet. This is in contrast to the wheel described above where the forces required to turn the wheel may vary due to the fact that the lid sheet is wound around the wheel. The lid sheet is not wound around the roller. The roller also has the advantage that the lid sheet does not have to be looped around or fixed to the roller before use of the device, therefore simplifying assembly of the device and reducing costs.

In a further aspect, the lid driving means comprise a lid spool. The lid spool comprises a toothed wheel with a central upward cylindrical projection on which the lid sheet may be wound when it has been separated from the base sheet. The lid

spool may have a mechanical gearing mechanism which is driven on actuation of the dispenser; the lid sheet is pulled away from the base sheet and wound onto the lid spool, causing the rotatable indexing wheel to turn and index the base sheet by one dose. An interlock coupling, as described *supra*, may be moved along the base of
5 the rotatable indexing wheel until it fits into the next base recess. The positioning of the interlock coupling in this recess limits the movement of the lid spool to the distance between two pockets on the base sheet and therefore prevents the amount of lid sheet which is wound around the lid spool from increasing as the diameter of the lid spool is increased.

10

Suitably, said lid driving means comprises a wheel on which the lid sheet is wound up. Typically, said lid sheet wheel has an effective winding surface, the diameter of which increases after every use of the dispenser as the lid sheet winds around the wheel.

15

In order to ensure that the same dose is dispensed every time, that is, only a defined number of medicament pocket are opened for every actuation of the dispenser, there may be provided an electronic control system comprising means to limit the extent of movement of said lid driving means, in order to control the length of medicament
20 carrier peeled by said peeling means. Hence, the medicament carrier is indexed by the same amount each time and a uniform, consistent dose is always dispensed.

The dispenser may further comprise compensating means positioned between said opening station and said lid sheet wheel for reducing the length of said lid sheet
25 therebetween to compensate for any increase in the diameter of the effective winding surface of the lid sheet wheel during use of the dispenser.

Typically, the compensating means takes the form of a flexible member. The flexible member may take the form of a flexible elongate arm about which the lid sheet is
30 fed. The arm may flex inwards as tension in the lid sheet increases, and thus shorten the length of lid sheet between the opening station and the lid driving means.

Suitably, the compensating means takes the form of a spring which reduces in length as tension increase in the lid sheet between the opening station and the lid driving means. Typically a piston head is mounted on one end of the spring about which the lid sheet is fed. The other end of the spring may be fixed. As tension in the lid sheet increases the piston is driven down onto the spring.

Suitably, the compensating means takes the form of a sprung-loaded tensioner.

10 Suitably, the flexible member is resilient so that on removal of tension from the lid sheet, the flexible member will return to its rest position. Thus, the internal mechanism can be reloaded with a new medicament carrier after the used carrier is removed.

15 Alternatively, or in addition, the dispenser may comprise a clutch means to adjust for any increase in the diameter of the effective winding surface of the lid driving means during use of the dispenser. In one aspect, the clutch means communicates with the indexing means and the lid driving means, and comprises a gearing surface defining plural gear engagement positions; and plural gear teeth for engaging said plural gear
20 engagement positions, wherein the plural gear teeth are arranged such that at any one time only a single gear tooth engages a single gear engagement position.

It will be appreciated that, in use, the clutch means acts to compensate for the increase in diameter of said effective winding surface of the lid driving means. The
25 clutch means allows for slippage when the tension in the lid sheet is greater than the force required to peel apart the lid sheet and the base sheet.

It will be appreciated that in total, the clutch means effectively defines a number of individual gear positions which is greater than the number of gear engagement
30 positions. This is therefore advantageous over a traditional slipping clutch arrangement comprising intermeshing gear wheels, where the effective number of

individual gear positions defined is either equal to, or no more than, the number of gear engagement positions defined by one of the gear wheels. The clutch means herein is also typically more compact than traditional slipping clutch arrangements e.g. because it enables smaller gearing surfaces to be employed.

5

Suitably, the gearing surface and plural gear teeth are arranged such that the number of individual gear positions defined is equal to the number of gear engagement positions multiplied by the number of gear teeth. In one example, if the gearing surface defines 60 gear engagement positions and there are 6 gear teeth, then up to 360 individual gear positions are definable (e.g. 1° resolution on a rotating gear system).

Suitably, the gearing surface defines from 20 to 100, preferably from 40 to 80 gear engagement positions. Suitably, the number of gear teeth is from 2 to 20, preferably from 3 to 10.

In one aspect, the gear engagement positions are equally spaced (e.g. equidistantly spaced) and the gear teeth are offset (e.g. non-equidistantly spaced) relative thereto. Such offset arrangement maximises the number of effective individual gear positions which are capable of definition. An example of this aspect, is a Vernier spring arrangement.

In another aspect, the gear engagement positions are also equally spaced (e.g. equidistantly spaced) and the gear teeth are located on a wobbling element capable of wobbling the gear teeth to plural offset (e.g. non-equidistantly spaced) positions. Such a wobbling offset arrangement also maximises the number of effective individual gear positions which are capable of being defined. An example of this aspect, is the wobbling wheel arrangement described herein.

In aspects, the clutch means is non-integral with either of the lid driving means or the indexing means, but forms a separate interconnecting component.

Suitably, the gearing surface comprises a gear wheel. As used herein, the term gear wheel encompasses, for example, a wheel, spindle or spool.

- 5 Suitably, the gear teeth may be arranged to be in ratchet form (i.e. enabling movement in one direction only).

Suitably, the gearing surface and gear teeth are in biased (e.g. sprung) engagement.

- 10 In one aspect, the lid driving means comprises a spiked wheel. As the spiked wheel turns, the lid sheet is pulled over it and the spikes perforate parts of the lid sheet to improve the grip on the lid sheet. The lid sheet then passes out into a chamber where it collects.

- 15 In another aspect, the lid driving means comprises a clamp system. The clamp system comprises at least one angled spring which is pivotable at one end and grips the lid sheet at the other end. The clamp system is moved in the direction that the lid sheet is to be pulled and grips the lid sheet, pulling it and therefore peeling it away from the base sheet. The clamp system is then moved back to its rest position. This
20 results in the spring pivoting and clamping the lid sheet, therefore preventing the lid sheet from being further peeled from the base sheet.

- In another aspect, the used portion of the lid sheet may be passed around rollers and fed back onto the used portion of the base sheet after the medicament has been
25 accessed to join back onto the base sheet. The lid sheet may be coated with a sticky substance to aid resealing. The use of this mechanism saves space as the used portions of the blister strip will be collected in the same area.

- In another aspect, the coil comprising an unused medicament carrier (e.g. blister
30 strip) may be surrounded by a constant force spring. Alternatively, the coil comprising the unused blister strip may be surrounded by an elastomeric band or

band comprising a contractible material. The constant force spring, elastomeric band or band comprising a contractible material contracts as the coil reduces in size.

Suitably, said peeling means additionally comprise a guide for guiding the lid sheet
5 and base sheet along separate paths at the opening station. The lid sheet is passed around the guide portion onto the lid driving means.

Alternatively, the guide comprises a roller mechanism. The lid sheet is fed over the rollers onto the lid driving means.

10

Suitably, the internal mechanism additionally comprises a first chamber in which at least one strip is initially housed and from which it is dispensed and a second chamber to receive the used portion of the base sheet after it has been indexed around the index wheel and separated from the lid sheet.

15

Suitably, said first chamber and said second chamber are separated by a wall.

Suitably, said wall is movable to adjust the size of said first and second chambers.

20 In one aspect, the wall is pivotally mountable. Alternatively the wall is slidably mountable.

Suitably, the internal mechanism further comprises a third chamber to receive the used portion of the lid sheet and a fourth chamber which houses the index ratchet.

25 The fourth chamber may communicate via a slit, which in turn extends upwardly within a mouthpiece and communicates with air inlets.

Suitably, the internal mechanism additionally comprises a crushing wheel to crush the medicament pockets after the medicament has been removed from them. The
30 crushing wheel therefore reduces the space which the used portion of the base sheet takes up.

Typically, the internal mechanism for accessing said medicament contained within said medicament carrier is housed within a cassette.

- 5 Thus, in another embodiment, there is provided a medicament dispenser for dispensing medicament comprising: a body; a holder, shaped to fit within said body and movable relative to said body; and receivable by said holder, said cassette containing the medicament carrier.
- 10 Suitably, any electronic drive system is located in either the body or the holder part, and the cassette comprises the minimum number of component (i.e. internal mechanism) parts. In embodiments, the body/holder including the electronic drive is designed to be retained by the user and the cassette is sold as a refill/reload component which is discarded after use. By locating the electronic drive system in
- 15 the body/holder, the amount of electronic components which are discarded is minimised which is advantageous from an environmental standpoint.

Suitably, the cassette of the medicament dispenser herein comprises

- 20 a) an opening station for receiving a pocket of each of said medicament carriers;
- b) peeling means positioned to engage a base sheet and a lid sheet of a pocket which has been received in said opening station for peeling apart such a base sheet and lid sheet, to open such a pocket, said peeling means including lid driving means
- 25 for pulling apart a lid sheet and a base sheet of a pocket that has been received at said opening station;
- c) an outlet, positioned to be in communication with an opened pocket through which a user can access a medicament dose portion from such an opened pocket;
- 30 and

d) indexing means for individually indexing the distinct pockets of each of the plural medicament carriers.

Suitably, movement of the holder relative to the body results in movement of the
5 cassette between a first position and a second position such that the cassette is reversibly removable from the holder when the cassette is in the second position.

Suitably the first position comprises a dispensing position. Preferably the second position comprises a non-dispensing position. The cassette is therefore only
10 removable from the holder when the cassette is in the non-dispensing position.

Suitably, the holder and body include attaching means to attach the holder to the body. Preferably, said attaching means comprise a snap fit mechanism. Suitably said snap fit mechanism comprises a pin and hole system.

15

Suitably, the holder is pivotally movable relative to the body. Alternatively the holder is rotationally movable relative to the body.

Suitably the holder additionally comprises a stop to limit movement of the holder
20 relative to the body. The stop abuts against the edge of the body at two points when it is rotated. At these points the holder may be designed to click into place. Therefore when the stop abuts one body edge then it is clicked into the dispensing position and when the stop abuts the other body edge then it is clicked into the non-dispensing position.

25

Alternatively the holder is slidably movable relative to the body.

Suitably, the holder additionally comprises a catch to retain the cassette. The catch may for example comprise a sprung pin which fits into a hole or an integral catch
30 which deforms when pressed allowing removal of the cassette.

~~Suitably, the catch is child resistant. Child resistance may be realised by having a~~
system which forces the user to perform two actions at once to remove the cassette.
Other features of the catch may include shock or impact resistance, the ability to lock
the catch and orientation features to ensure that the cassette can only be inserted
5 one way. The catch should also be easy to manufacture and assemble, be robust,
be composed of a minimal number of components and intrude minimally into the
space into which the cassette is inserted.

Suitably, the holder includes guide means to guide the cassette into the holder.
10 Preferably said guide means comprise guide rails. Alternatively the guide means
comprise grooves, indentations or other shaping or surface details to define a 'lock
and key' relationship between the holder and the cassette. Colour guides, arrows
and any other surface markings may also be employed.

15 Suitably, the cassette additionally comprises means to actuate the dispenser. The
actuating means may take the form of a switch, push-button or lever.

Suitably, the cassette additionally comprises a mouthpiece.

20 Suitably, said mouthpiece is extendable. The mouthpiece extends as the cassette
and holder are moved from the non-dispensing position to the dispensing position.

Alternatively the mouthpiece is retractable. The mouthpiece retracts as the cassette
and holder are moved from the dispensing position to the non-dispensing position.

25

In one aspect, the mouthpiece is telescopic. In another aspect, the mouthpiece is
fixed.

The medicament dispenser may also be designed for nasal inhalation of a powdered
30 medicament and may therefore incorporate a nosepiece as an alternative to a

mouthpiece. If the medicament is in solid form, the dispenser may incorporate an exit channel for tablet release.

Suitably, the body covers the mouthpiece and indexing means (e.g. lever) when the cassette is in the non-dispensing position. This avoids the need for a separate cover and protects the mouthpiece from the ingress of dirt and contaminants during storage.

Suitably, the cassette additionally comprises a raised portion to fit against the holder. The raised portion is located at the opposite end of the cassette to the mouthpiece/nosepiece/exit and indexing lever and prevents the incorrect insertion of the cassette into the holder since it is too wide to fit into the holder. The raised portion is shaped such that it fits against a cut away part of the holder. Preferably said raised portion includes a section which is raised to define a grip portion.

Suitably, at least a portion of the holder and body are shaped for ease of grip by the user.

Suitably, operation of the dispenser may be performed with one hand.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser comprises an actuation or dose counter for counting the number of actuations of the indexing lever or releases of dose from the cassette.

The dose counter may count the number of doses left to be taken or the number of doses taken.

In one aspect, said dose counter is electronic. Alternatively said dose counter is mechanical.

~~In one aspect, said dose counter is located within the cassette. Alternatively, the~~
dose counter is external to the cassette.

In one aspect, the blister strip has printed numbers on it corresponding to the doses
5 in the pockets. Preferably, said printed numbers are visible through a window in the
cassette.

The dispenser may be assembled as follows. The holder is snap fitted into the body.
The cassette is assembled separately. The body of the cassette is formed,
10 preferably in two sections with any necessary spindles or integral components
formed into the base. Individual components such as indexing wheels, lid winding
mechanisms, guide portions etc are then assembled into the base. Finally the plural
medicament containing blister strips (or other suitable elongate form medicament
carriers) may be inserted into the cassette. These may be wound into the dispenser
15 before the lid is attached to the cassette and the cassette sealed. Alternatively, the
cassette may be formed completely apart from a hole left in its side for insertion of
the plural blister strips or medicament carriers. The hole may then be sealed to
complete the cassette. This second method of inserting the medicament carriers
into the dispenser has the advantage that it is much simpler.

20

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises an electronic data
management system. The electronic data management system has input/output
capability and comprises a memory for storage of data; a microprocessor for
performing operations on said data; and a transmitter for transmitting a signal
25 relating to the data or the outcome of an operation on the data.

Suitably, the electronic data management system is arranged to be responsive to or
activated by the voice of a user. Thus, for example the system may be switched on
or off in response to a voice command.

30

The electronic data management system may be integral with the body. Alternatively, the electronic data management system forms part of a base unit which is reversibly associable with the body.

5 Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a data input system for user input of data to the electronic data management system. Preferably, the data input system comprises a man machine interface (MMI) preferably selected from a keypad, voice recognition interface, graphical user interface (GUI) or biometrics interface.

10

Energy may be conserved by a variety of means to enable the device to operate for longer on a given source of energy, such as a battery. Energy conservation or saving methods have additional advantages in terms of reducing the size requirements of the power source (e.g. battery) and thus the weight and portability of
15 the medicament dispenser.

A variety of energy saving methods is available which generally involve reducing power consumption. One such method is to use a clock or timer circuit to switch the power on and off at regular or predetermined intervals. In another method the
20 system can selectively switch on/off specific electronic devices, such as visual display units or sensors, in order to power these devices only when they are required to perform a particular sequence of events. Thus different electronic devices may be switched on and off at varying intervals and for varying periods under control of the system. The power sequencing system may also respond to a sensor, such as a
25 motion or breath sensor, which is activated on use of the device.

Low power or "micropower" components should be used within the electronics where possible and if a high power device is required for a particular function this should be put into a low power standby mode or switched off when not required. Similar
30 considerations apply in the selection of transducers. Operation at low voltage is desirable since power dissipation generally increases with voltage.

For low power digital applications complementary metal oxide semi-conductor (CMOS) devices are generally preferred and these may be specially selected by screening for low quiescent currents. Clock speeds of processors and other logic circuits should be reduced to the minimum required for computational throughput as power consumption increases with frequency. Supply voltages should also be kept at minimal values consistent with reliable operation because power dissipation in charging internal capacitance's during switching is proportional to the square of the voltage. Where possible, supply voltages should be approximately the same throughout the circuit to prevent current flowing through input protection circuits. Logic inputs should not be left floating and circuits should be arranged so that power consumption is minimised in the most usual logic output state. Slow logic transitions are undesirable because they can result in relatively large class-A currents flowing. Resistors may be incorporated in the power supply to individual devices in order to minimise current in the event of failure.

In some control applications, devices that switch between on and off states are preferred to those that allow analog (e.g. linear) control because less power is dissipated in low resistance on states and low current off states. Where linear components are used (e.g. certain types of voltage regulators) then types with low quiescent currents should be selected. In some circuit configurations it is preferable to use appropriate reactive components (i.e. inductors and capacitors) to reduce power dissipation in resistive components.

Suitably, the system additionally comprises a visual display unit for display of data from the electronic data management system to the user. The display may for example, comprise a screen such as an LED or LCD screen. More preferably the visual display unit is associable with the body of the medicament dispenser.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a datalink for linking to a local data store to enable communication of data between the local data store and

the electronic data management system. The datastore may also comprise data management, data analysis and data communication capability.

The datastore may itself form part of a portable device (e.g. a handheld device) or it
5 may be sized and shaped to be accommodated within the patient's home. The
datastore may also comprise a physical storage area for storage of replacement
cassettes. The datastore may further comprise a system for refilling medicament
from a reservoir of medicament product stored therewithin. The datastore may
further comprise an electrical recharging system for recharging any electrical energy
10 store on the medicament dispenser, particularly a battery recharging system.

The datalink may for example enable linking with a docking station, a personal
computer, a network computer system or a set-top box by any suitable method
including a hard-wired link, an infrared link or any other suitable wireless
15 communications link.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises an actuation detector for
detecting actuation of the dispensing mechanism wherein said actuation detector
transmits actuation data to the electronic data management system.

20

The medicament dispenser may additionally comprise a safety mechanism to
prevent unintended multiple actuations of the dispensing mechanism. The patient is
thereby protected from inadvertently receiving multiple doses of medicament in a
situation where they take a number of short rapid breaths. More preferably, the
25 safety mechanism imposes a time delay between successive actuations of the
release means. The time delay is typically of the order of from three to thirty
seconds.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a release detector for
30 detecting release of medicament from the cassette, wherein said release detector
transmits release data to the electronic data management system.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a shake detector for detecting shaking of the medicament container (e.g. prior to actuation of the dispensing mechanism), wherein said shake detector transmits shake data to the
5 electronic data management system.

Suitably, any actuation detector, release detector, or shake detector comprises a sensor for detecting any suitable parameter such as movement. Any suitable sensors are envisaged including the use of optical sensors. The release detector
10 may sense any parameter affected by release of the medicament such as pressure, temperature, sound, moisture, carbon dioxide concentration and oxygen concentration.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a breath trigger for
15 triggering the dispensing mechanism, said breath trigger being actuable in response to a trigger signal from the electronic data management system. Preferably, the electronic data management system includes a predictive algorithm or look-up table for deriving from the breath data when to transmit the trigger signal. For example, a real-time analysis of the patient breath waveform may be made and the trigger point
20 derived by reference to that analysed waveform.

Suitably, the electronic data management system includes a predictive algorithm or look-up table for calculating the optimum amount of medicament to dispense.

25 Suitably, the memory on the electronic data management system includes a dose memory for storing dosage data and reference is made to the dose memory in calculating the optimum amount of medicament to dispense.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a selector for selecting
30 the amount of medicament to dispense from said dispensing mechanism. In one aspect, the selector is manually operable. In another aspect, the selector is operable

in response to a signal from the transmitter on the electronic data management system.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser comprises in association with a body or housing thereof, a first transceiver for transmitting and receiving data and in association with the medicament container, a second transceiver for transmitting and receiving data, wherein data is transferable in two-way fashion from the first transceiver to the second transceiver. The data is preferably in digital form and suitable for transfer by electronic or optical means. A medicament dispenser of this general type is described in pending UK Patent Application No. 0020538.5.

One advantage of embodiments of this type is the ability to store many types of information in different parts of the memory structure of the transceivers. The information is furthermore stored in a form which is readily and accurately transferable. The information could for example, include manufacturing and distribution compliance information written to the memory at various points in the manufacturing or distribution process, thereby providing a detailed and readily accessible product history of the dispenser. Such product history information may, for example, be referred to in the event of a product recall. The compliance information could, for example, include date and time stamps. The information could also include a unique serial number stored in encrypted form or in a password protectable part of the memory which uniquely identifies the product and therefore may assist in the detection and prevention of counterfeiting. The information could also include basic product information such as the nature of the medicament and dosing information, customer information such as the name of the intended customer, and distribution information such as the intended product destination.

On loading or reloading the medicament dispenser with a cassette the second transceiver may, for example, read the unique serial number, batch code and expiry date of the medicament and any other information on the second transceiver. In this way the nature and concentration of the medicament, together with the number of

~~doses used or remaining within the cassette, may be determined.~~ This information can be displayed to the patient on a visual display unit. Other information, such as the number of times the medicament dispenser has been reloaded with a cassette, may also be displayed.

5

Similarly, should the cassette be removed from the holder before the supply of medicament is exhausted, the same data can be read from the second transceiver and the number of doses remaining or used determined. Other information, such as the date and time of administration of the drug, or environmental exposure data such
10 as the minimum / maximum temperatures or levels of humidity the cassette has been exposed to, may also be read and displayed to the user.

In the event that the supply of medicament within the container becomes exhausted, or that the shelf life of the medicament has expired, or that the first transceiver does
15 not recognise the batch code on the second transceiver, activation of the dispenser may be prevented to safeguard the user. Activation may also be prevented if the medicament has been exposed to extreme environmental conditions for periods outwith the manufacturer's guidelines.

20 Data may be transferred to and from any transceiver during the period of use of the medicament dispenser by the patient. For example, the medicament dispenser may include an electronic data management system having various sensors associated therewith. Any data collected by the sensors or from any data collection system associated with the electronic data management system including a clock or other
25 date/time recorder is transferable.

Data may be transferred each time the patient uses the device. Or alternatively, data may be stored in a database memory of the electronic data management system and periodically downloaded to any transceiver. In either case, a history of
30 the usage of the device may be built up in the memory of a transceiver.

In one embodiment herein, a history of the usage of the medicament dispenser is transferred to the second transceiver. When the medicament carriers in the cassette are exhausted it is exchanged by the patient for a new refill cassette. At the point of exchange, which will typically occur at the pharmacy, data may be transferred from the exhausted cassette to the refill and vice-versa. Additionally, usage history data may be read from the refill and transferred to a healthcare data management system for example comprising a network computer system under the control of a healthcare data manager.

10 Methods are envisaged herein whereby the patient is given some sort of reward for returning the refill and making available the data comprised within the second transceiver. Methods are also envisaged herein whereby the healthcare data manager is charged for either receipt of the data from the second transceiver or for its use for commercial purposes. Any rewards or charging may be arranged electronically. The methods may be enabled by distributed or web-based computer network systems in which any collected data is accessible through a hub on the network. The hub may incorporate various security features to ensure patient confidentiality and to allow selective access to information collected dependent upon level of authorisation. The level of user authorisation may be allocated primarily to safeguard patient confidentiality. Beyond this the level of user authorisation may also be allocated on commercial terms with for example broader access to the database being authorised in return for larger commercial payments.

Suitably, the first and second transceiver each comprise an antenna or equivalent for transmitting or receiving data and connecting thereto a memory. The memory will typically comprise an integrated circuit chip. Either transceiver may be configured to have a memory structure which allows for large amounts of information to be stored thereon. The memory structure can be arranged such that parts of the memory are read-only, being programmed during/after manufacture, other parts are read/write and further parts are password protectable. Initial transfer of information (e.g. on manufacture or one dispensing) to or from any transceiver can be arranged to be

~~readily achievable by the use of a reader which is remote from the medicament~~
dispenser, thereby minimising the need for direct product handling. In further aspects, the reader can be arranged to simultaneously read or write to the memory of multiple transceivers on multiple medicament dispensers.

5

A suitable power source such as a battery, clockwork energy store, solar cell, fuel cell or kinetics-driven cell will be provided as required to any electronic component herein. The power source may be arranged to be rechargeable or reloadable.

- 10 Suitably, data is transferable in two-way fashion between the first and second transceiver without the need for direct physical contact therebetween. Preferably, data is transferable wirelessly between the first and second transceiver.

Suitably, the first transceiver is an active transceiver and the second transceiver is a
15 passive transceiver. The term active is used to mean directly-powered and the term passive is used to mean indirectly-powered.

Suitably, the second transceiver comprises a label or tag comprising an antenna for transmitting or receiving energy; and an integrated circuit chip connecting with said
20 antenna, and the first transceiver comprises a reader for said label or tag. In this case the label or tag is a passive transceiver and the reader is an active transceiver. Preferably, the reader will not need to be in direct contact with the tag or label to enable the tag or label to be read.

- 25 The tag may be used in combination and/or integrated with other traditional product labelling methods including visual text, machine-readable text, bar codes and dot codes.

Suitably, the integrated circuit chip has a read only memory area, a write only
30 memory area, a read/write memory area or combinations thereof.

Suitably, the integrated circuit chip has a one-time programmable memory area. More preferably, the one-time programmable memory area contains a unique serial number.

- 5 Suitably, the integrated circuit chip has a preset memory area containing a factory preset, non-changeable, unique data item. The preset memory item is most preferably in encrypted form.

Suitably, the integrated circuit chip has plural memory areas thereon. Suitably, any
10 memory area is password protected.

Suitably, any memory area contains data in encrypted form. Electronic methods of checking identity, error detection and data transfer may also be employed.

- 15 In one aspect, the integrated circuit has plural memory areas thereon including a read only memory area containing a unique serial number, which may for example be embedded at the time of manufacture; a read/write memory area which can be made read only once information has been written thereto; and a password
20 protected memory area containing data in encrypted form which data may be of anti-counterfeiting utility.

Suitably, the tag is on a carrier and the carrier is mountable on the body or holder of the medicament dispenser or on the cassette.

- 25 In one aspect, the carrier is a flexible label. In another aspect, the carrier is a rigid disc. In a further aspect, the carrier is a rectangular block. In a further aspect, the carrier is a collar ring suitable for mounting to the neck of an aerosol container. Other shapes of carrier are also envisaged.

~~Suitably, the carrier is mouldable or weldable to the cassette or housing. Suitably,~~
the carrier encases the tag. More preferably, the carrier forms a hermetic seal for the tag.

- 5 In one aspect, the carrier comprises an insulating material such as a glass material or, a paper material or an organic polymeric material such as polypropylene. Alternatively, the carrier comprises a ferrite material.

The energy may be in any suitable form including ultrasonic, infrared,
10 radiofrequency, magnetic, optical and laser form. Any suitable channels may be used to channel the energy including fibre optic channels.

In one aspect, the second transceiver comprises a radiofrequency identifier comprising an antenna for transmitting or receiving radiofrequency energy; and an
15 integrated circuit chip connecting with said antenna, and the first transceiver comprises a reader for said radiofrequency identifier. In this case the radiofrequency identifier is a passive transceiver and the reader is an active transceiver. An advantage of radiofrequency identifier technology is that the reader need not be in direct contact with the radiofrequency identifier tag or label to be read.

20

The radiofrequency identifier can be any known radiofrequency identifier. Such identifiers are sometimes known as radiofrequency transponders or radiofrequency identification (RFID) tags or labels. Suitable radiofrequency identifiers include those sold by Phillips Semiconductors of the Netherlands under the trade marks Hitag and
25 Icode, those sold by Amtech Systems Corporation of the United States of America under the trade mark Intellitag, and those sold by Texas Instruments of the United States of America under the trade mark Tagit.

Suitably, the antenna of the RFID tag is capable of transmitting or receiving
30 radiofrequency energy having a frequency of from 100 kHz to 2.5 GHz. Preferred operating frequencies are selected from 125 kHz, 13.56 MHz and 2.4 GHz.

In one aspect, the second transceiver comprises a magnetic label or tag comprising an antenna for transmitting or receiving magnetic field energy; and an integrated circuit chip connecting with said antenna, and the first transceiver comprises a reader for said magnetic label or tag. In this case the magnetic label or tag is a passive transceiver and the reader is an active transceiver.

A suitable magnetic label or tag comprises plural magnetic elements in mutual association whereby the magnetic elements move relative to each other in response to an interrogating magnetic field. A magnetic label or tag of this type is described in U.S. Patent No. 4,940,966. Another suitable magnetic label or tag comprises a magnetorestrictive element which is readable by application of an interrogating alternating magnetic field in the presence of a magnetic bias field which results in resonance of the magnetorestrictive elements at different predetermined frequencies. A magnetic label of this type is described in PCT Patent Application No. WO92/12402. Another suitable magnetic label or tag comprising plural discrete magnetically active regions in a linear array is described in PCT Patent Application No. WO96/31790. Suitable magnetic labels and tags include those making use of Programmable Magnetic Resonance (PMR) (trade name) technology.

20

In another aspect, the second transceiver comprises a microelectronic memory chip and the first transceiver comprises a reader for said microelectronic memory chip. The microelectronic memory chip may comprise an Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory (EEPROM) chip or a SIM card-type memory chip. In this case the microelectronic memory chip is a passive transceiver and the reader is an active transceiver.

Any transceiver herein, particularly a passive transceiver may be mounted on or encased within any suitable inert carrier. The carrier may comprise a flexible sheet which may in embodiments be capable of receiving printed text thereon.

~~In one aspect, the first transceiver is integral with the body such that a single unit is~~
comprised. The first transceiver may for example be encased within or moulded to
the body.

- 5 In another aspect, the first transceiver forms part of a base unit which is reversibly
associable with the body. The base unit may for example, form a module receivable
by the body such as a snap-in module.

Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a communicator for
10 wireless communication with a network computer system to enable transfer of data
between the network computer system and the electronic data management system.
Dispensers employing such communicators are described in pending PCT
Applications No.s PCT/EP00/09291 (PG3786), PCT/EP00/09293 (PG4029) and
PCT/EP00/09292 (PG4159). Preferably, the communicator enables two-way
15 transfer of data between the network computer system and the electronic data
management system.

Suitably, the data is communicable between the network computer system and the
electronic data management system in encrypted form. All suitable methods of
20 encryption or partial encryption are envisaged. Password protection may also be
employed. Suitably, the communicator employs radiofrequency or optical signals.

In one aspect, the communicator communicates via a gateway to the network
computer system. In another aspect, the communicator includes a network server
25 (e.g. a web server) such that it may directly communicate with the network.

In a further aspect, the communicator communicates with the gateway via a second
communications device. Preferably, the second communications device is a
telecommunications device, more preferably a cellular phone or pager. Preferably,
30 the communicator communicates with the second communications device using
spread spectrum radiofrequency signals. A suitable spread spectrum protocol is the

Bluetooth (trade mark) standard which employs rapid (e.g. 1600 times a second) hopping between plural frequencies (e.g. 79 different frequencies). The protocol may further employ multiple sending of data bits (e.g. sending in triplicate) to reduce interference.

5

In one aspect, the network computer system comprises a public access network computer system. The Internet is one suitable example of a public access network computer system, wherein the point of access thereto can be any suitable entrypoint including an entrypoint managed by an Internet service provider. The public access
10 network computer system may also form part of a telecommunications system, which may itself be either a traditional copper wire system, a cellular system or an optical network.

In another aspect, the network computer system comprises a private access network
15 computer system. The private access network system may for example, comprise an Intranet or Extranet which may for example, be maintained by a health service provider or medicament manufacturer. The network may for example include password protection; a firewall; and suitable encryption means.

20 Preferably, the communicator enables communication with a user-specific network address in the network computer system.

The user-specific network address may be selected from the group consisting of a web-site address, an e-mail address and a file transfer protocol address. Preferably,
25 the user-specific network address is accessible to a remote information source such that information from said remote information source can be made available thereto. More preferably, information from the user-specific network address can be made available to the remote information source.

30 In one aspect, the remote information source is a medicament prescriber, for example a doctors practice. Information transferred from the medicament prescriber

may thus, comprise changes to prescription details, automatic prescription updates or training information. Information transferred to the medicament prescriber may comprise compliance information, that is to say information relating to the patient's compliance with a set prescribing programme. Patient performance information
5 relating for example, to patient-collected diagnostic data may also be transferred to the medicament prescriber. Where the dispenser is an inhaler for dispensing medicament for the relief of respiratory disorders examples of such diagnostic data would include breath cycle data or peak flow data.

10 In another aspect, the remote information source is a pharmacy. Information transferred from the pharmacy may thus, comprise information relating to the medicament product. Information sent to the pharmacy may thus include prescription requests which have been remotely pre-authorised by the medicament prescriber.

15

In a further aspect, the remote information source is an emergency assistance provider, for example a hospital accident and emergency service or an emergency helpline or switchboard. The information may thus, comprise a distress or emergency assist signal which requests emergency assistance.

20

In a further aspect, the remote information source is a manufacturer of medicament or medicament delivery systems. Information transferred to the system may thus, ~~comprise product update information. The system may also be configured to feed~~
information back to the manufacturer relating to system performance.

25

In a further aspect, the remote information source is a research establishment. In a clinical trial situation, information may thus be transferred relating to the trial protocol and information relating to patient compliance fed back to the research establishment.

.. 30

In a further aspect, the remote information source is an environmental monitoring station. Information relating to weather, pollen counts and pollution levels may thus be made accessible to the system.

- 5 Suitably, the medicament dispenser additionally comprises a geographic positioning system such as a global positioning system or a system which relies on the use of multiple communications signals and a triangulation algorithm.

The constituent medicaments of the plural medicament dose portions suitably, in
10 combination comprise a combination medicament product. Suitably the medicaments are selected from the group consisting of albuterol, salmeterol, fluticasone propionate and beclomethasone dipropionate and salts or solvates thereof. Preferably, the combination comprises salmeterol xinafoate and fluticasone propionate.

15

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided the medicament dispenser described above in kit of parts form. A first part of the kit comprises a body; a holder, shaped to fit within said body and movable relative to said body; and within said holder a receiving station for receipt of a cassette. A
20 second part of the kit comprises a cassette containing plural elongate form medicament carriers and an internal mechanism for indexing said plural elongate forms medicament carriers, wherein the cassette is receivable by the receiving station and movement of the holder relative to the body results in movement of the cassette between a first position and a second position such that the cassette is
25 reversibly removable from the receiving station when the cassette is in the second position. Suitably, the holder also comprises an electronic drive system for driving the internal indexing mechanism of the cassette.

In one aspect, the medicament dispenser may be assembled as follows. The holder
30 is snap fitted into the body. The cassette is assembled separately. The body of the cassette is formed, preferably in two sections with any necessary spindles or integral

~~components formed into the base. Individual components such as indexing wheels,~~
lid winding mechanisms, guide portions etc are then assembled into the base.
Finally the plural elongate form medicament carriers (e.g. blister strips) are inserted
into the cassette. These may be wound into the dispenser before the lid is attached
5 to the cassette and the cassette sealed. Alternatively, the cassette may be formed
completely apart from a hole left in its side for insertion of the medicament carriers.
The hole may then be sealed to complete the cassette. This second method of
inserting the medicament carriers into the device has the advantage that it is much
simpler.

10

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in
15 which:

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a medicament carrier suitable for use in
accordance with the present invention;

20 Figure 2 shows a base unit housing an internal mechanism in accordance with one
aspect of the invention;

Figure 3 shows a base unit housing an internal mechanism according to another
aspect of the invention;

25

Figure 4a shows a perspective view of a medicament dispenser, in the form of a
holder/body and a refill cassette, according to the invention with the cassette
removed from the holder/body;

30 Figures 4b and 4c show side views of the inner workings of the holder of the device
of Figure 4a;

Figures 4d and 4e show side views of the inner workings of the cassette of the device of Figure 4a;

5 Figure 5 shows a block diagram of an electronic drive system suitable for use herein;

Figure 6a shows a plan view of a further medicament dispenser in accordance with the invention;

10 Figure 6b shows in perspective view a detail of the dispenser of Figure 6a.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

15 Figure 1 shows a medicament carrier 100 for use in accord with the present invention. The medicament carrier comprises a flexible strip 102 defining a plurality of pockets 104, 106, 108 each of which would contain a portion of a dose of medicament which can be inhaled, in the form of powder. Herein, plural such strips 102 would be employed in a single medicament dispenser, wherein each strip
20 provides the component medicament dose portions of doses of a combination medicament product.

The strip comprises a base sheet 110 in which blisters are formed to define the pockets 104, 106, 108 and a lid sheet 112 which is hermetically sealed to the base
25 sheet except in the region of the blisters in such a manner that the lid sheet 112 and the base sheet 110 can be peeled apart. The sheets 110, 112 are sealed to one another over their whole width except for the leading end portions 114, 116 where they are preferably not sealed to one another at all. The lid 112 and base 110 sheets are each preferably formed of a plastics/aluminium laminate and are
30 preferably adhered to one another by heat sealing.

~~The strip 102 is shown as having elongate pockets 104, 106, 108 which run~~
transversely with respect to the length of the strip 102. This is convenient in that it
enables a large number of pockets 104, 106, 108 to be provided in a given strip 102
length. The strip 102 may, for example, be provided with sixty or one hundred
5 pockets but it will be understood that the strip 102 may have any suitable number of
pockets.

Figure 2 illustrates a base unit 200 of a medicament dispenser according to the
invention. Plural blister strips (not shown for clarity) may be positioned, one on top
10 of each other, in chamber 202 of the base unit 200. The blisters strip are pre-fed
through a guide member 204 within the manifold component and engaged in a six-
pocket index wheel 206. The first pocket of each blister strip is positioned one
pocket away from the opening station 208. The lid foil and base foil are separable
about a beak 210. The resulting empty base foil is coiled about a base take-up
15 spindle 212 in the base take-up chamber 214. The used lid foil is fed over the beak
210 and coiled about a lid take-up spindle 216 in the lid take-up chamber 218.

The dispenser is actuated by pressing a button on the side of the dispenser (not
shown) which is linked to an electronic control system including a DC motor (not
20 shown for clarity) to index the internal mechanism by one pocket of medicament. The
DC motor thus indexes each strip and coils up the waste foils.

~~Initially, the gearing between the index wheel 206 and the lid take-up foil spindle 216~~
is one-to-one. However, as the lid take up spindle 216 winds on more foil, its
25 effective winding diameter increases. An increase in diameter would cause the lid
take-up spindle 216 to pull more strip than the index wheel 206 releases. Thus, in
this particular example, the electronic control system is programmed to compensate
for increase in lid spool diameter and adjust the amount the lid spool rotates
accordingly.

Figure 3 shows a medicament dispenser in accord with the present invention, comprising a body 300, a holder 302, refill cassette 304 and electronic display 306. The holder 302 is shaped to fit snugly inside body 300 and is fixed to a point on the body (not shown) about which it rotates. Stops 308, 310 protrude from the holder
5 302 and prevent the holder 302 from rotating more than about 180° relative to the body 300. The stops 308, 310 also provide two defined positions of the holder 302 within the body 300. One position is defined by stop 308 meeting with body edge 312 and the other position defined by stop 310 meeting with body edge 314 when the holder has been rotated relative to the body. The area between stops 308 and
10 310 is shaped to form a thumb or finger grip 316 for the user of the device. The holder 302 forms a shell into which the refill cassette 304 snugly fits.

The refill cassette 304 comprises a shell containing the plural medicaments carrier (not shown) and a mechanism for opening the carriers (not shown) for the
15 medicament to be accessed. The refill cassette 304 has a raised portion 318 at one end on both sides along its width so that this part of the refill cassette 304 is at least the same depth as the part of the holder 320 which receives the refill cassette 304. This allows the position of the cassette 304 within the holder 302 to be fixed such that the ridge 318 protrudes from the holder 302 but the rest of the cassette 304 is
20 contained within the holder 302.

The refill cassette 304 also has a mouthpiece (not shown) and an actuating push button 322 for actuating the DC motor for indexing the medicament carrier within the cassette 304.

25

Figures 4a to 4e illustrate a medicament dispenser according to another aspect of the present invention. The dispenser comprises a body 400 in the form of a cassette holder which receives a cassette 402. The cassette has a mouthpiece 404 which is covered by a rotating lid 406 when the cassette 402 is *in situ* in the body 400.

30

Figures 4b and 4c show a split-shell view of the holder 400 body shell. The body 400 is provided with DC motor 430 powered by battery 432, responsive to actuator switch 431. In use, the motor 430 drives gear wheels 434, 436, wherein gear wheel 436 drives foil spool 416 of the cassette 402 to advance medicament dose portions. The body 400 is also provided with cassette release button 418 which releases a reversible catch mechanism (not shown) to enable mechanical release of a cassette 402 from the holder body 400. Electronic control system in the form of circuitry 440, 441 controls the DC motor 430, responsive to the actuator switch 431, and also controls LCD screen 406 for display of information to the user.

10

Figures 4d and 4e show the cassette 402 in more detail. Plural medicament strips (not shown for clarity) are positioned one on top of each other in chamber 403 of the cassette unit 402. Each strip is pre-fed through a guide member 404 within the manifold component and engaged in a multi-pocket index wheel 406. The first pocket of each strip is positioned one pocket away from the opening station 408. The lid foil and base foil are separable about a beak 410. The resulting empty base foil is coiled about a base take-up spindle 412 in the base take-up chamber 414. The used lid foil is fed over the beak 410 and coiled about a lid take-up spindle 416 in the lid take-up chamber 418.

20

The dispenser of Figures 4a to 4e is actuated by pressing the actuator button 431 on the side of the dispenser which is linked to the electronic control system 440, 441 which controls DC motor 430 to index the internal mechanism by one pocket of medicament. The DC motor 430 thus indexes each strip and coils up the waste foils.

25

Initially, the gearing between the index wheel 406 and the lid take-up foil spindle 416 is one-to-one. However, as the lid take up spindle 416 winds on more foil, its effective winding diameter increases. An increase in diameter would cause the lid take-up spindle 416 to pull more strip than the index wheel 406 releases. Thus, in this particular example, the electronic control system 440, 441 is programmed to

30

compensate for an increase in lid spool 416 diameter and adjust the amount the lid spool 416 rotates accordingly.

Figure 5 shows a schematic view of an electronic control system suitable for use in a medicament dispenser herein. The control system is typically located in the body/holder of a refillable medicament dispenser (e.g. as shown in Figures 4a to 4e). Central processor unit (CPU) 550 communicates with power control 551; battery 552; and clock 553. The CPU 550 also communicates with various user input/output functions which in combination comprise a man machine interface (MMI). In more detail, the MMI comprises an LCD display 554; power control for the LCD 555; and menu/switch inputs 556. Various memories including EEPROM dose data memory 557 and EEPROM symbol data memory 558 also communicate with the CPU 550.

Importantly, the control system 550 also communicates with the motor drive 560 and switch detector 561 therefor. Sensors are provided to detect user input 562 (e.g. manual actuation of the dispenser) and release of dose 563 from the dispenser. In embodiments, the dispenser is provided with a power management system enabling various power saving modes such as 'sleep' and 'powered down' modes.

Figure 6a illustrates the base unit 600 of a medicament dispenser according to the invention. In use, a cover (not shown) would be provided to the base unit 600. First and second medicament-containing blister strips 601a, 601b are positioned within respective left and right chambers 602a, 602b of the base unit 600. Each blister strip 601a, 601b is engaged in a respective multi-pocket index wheel 606a, 606b, and successive pockets guided towards a commonly located opening station 608. The rotation of the index wheels 606a, 606b is coupled. At the opening station 608, the lid foil 620a, 620b and base foil 621a, 621b parts of each strip 601a, 601b are peelably separable about a beak 610a, 610b. The resulting empty base foil 621a, 621b coils up in respective base take-up chambers 614a, 614b. The used lid foil 620a, 620b is fed over its respective beak 610a, 610b and coiled about a lid take-up spindle 616a, 616b in the lid take-up chamber 618a, 618b.

Released medicament in powder form from both the first 601a and second 601b strips is channelled via common manifold 622 to a single outlet 624 for inhalation by the patient. Importantly, the dispenser thereby enables different medicament types to
5 be stored separately in each of the strips 601a, 601b but the release and delivery thereof to the patient as a combined inhaled product.

Figure 6b shows the release of medicament in more detail. The patient breathes in through the outlet 624 resulting in negative pressure being transmitted through
10 manifold 622 to the opened pockets of the strips 601a, 601b at the opening station 608. This results in the creation of a venturi effect which results in the powder contained within each of the opened pockets 601a, 601b being drawn out through the common manifold 622 to the outlet and hence to the patient. Mixing of each separately delivered component of the combined medicament product will thus,
15 clearly happen during the delivery process, particularly as a result of the so created venturi effect.

The dispenser is actuated by pressing a button on the side of the dispenser (not shown) which is linked to an electronic control system including a DC motor 626 to
20 index the internal mechanism by one pocket of medicament for each blister strip 601a, 601b. The DC motor 626, thus indexes each strip 601a, 601b and coils up the waste foils.

It may be appreciated that any of the parts of the dispenser or cassette which contact
25 the medicament suspension may be coated with materials such as fluoropolymer materials (e.g. PTFE or FEP) which reduce the tendency of medicament to adhere thereto. Any movable parts may also have coatings applied thereto which enhance their desired movement characteristics. Frictional coatings may therefore be applied to enhance frictional contact and lubricants (e.g. silicone oil) used to reduce frictional
30 contact as necessary.

The medicament dispenser of the invention is suitable for dispensing medicament combinations, particularly for the treatment of respiratory disorders such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), bronchitis and chest infections.

5 Appropriate medicaments may thus be selected from, for example, analgesics, e.g., codeine, dihydromorphine, ergotamine, fentanyl or morphine; anginal preparations, e.g., diltiazem; antiallergics, e.g., cromoglycate (e.g. as the sodium salt), ketotifen or nedocromil (e.g. as the sodium salt); antiinfectives e.g., cephalosporins, penicillins, streptomycin, sulphonamides, tetracyclines and pentamidine; antihistamines, e.g.,
10 methapyrilene; anti- inflammatories, e.g., beclomethasone (e.g. as the dipropionate ester), fluticasone (e.g. as the propionate ester), flunisolide, budesonide, rofleponide, mometasone e.g. as the furoate ester), ciclesonide, triamcinolone (e.g. as the acetonide) or 6α , 9α -difluoro- 11β -hydroxy- 16α -methyl-3-oxo- 17α -propionyloxy-androsta-1,4-diene- 17β -carbothioic acid S-(2-oxo-tetrahydro-furan-3-yl) ester;
15 antitussives, e.g., noscapine; bronchodilators, e.g., albuterol (e.g. as free base or sulphate), salmeterol (e.g. as xinafoate), ephedrine, adrenaline, fenoterol (e.g. as hydrobromide), formoterol (e.g. as fumarate), isoprenaline, metaproterenol, phenylephrine, phenylpropanolamine, pirbuterol (e.g. as acetate), reproterol (e.g. as hydrochloride), rimiterol, terbutaline (e.g. as sulphate), isoetharine, tulobuterol or 4-
20 hydroxy-7-[2-[[[3-(2-phenylethoxy)propyl]sulfonyl]ethyl]amino]ethyl-2(3H)-benzothiazolone; adenosine 2a agonists, e.g. 2R,3R,4S,5R)-2-[6-Amino-2-(1S-hydroxymethyl-2-phenyl-ethylamino)-purin-9-yl]-5-(2-ethyl-2H-tetrazol-5-yl)-tetrahydro-furan-3,4-diol (e.g. as maleate); α_4 integrin inhibitors e.g. (2S)-3-[4-({[4-(aminocarbonyl)-1-piperidinyl]carbonyl}oxy)phenyl]-2-(((2S)-4-methyl-2-{{[2-(2-methylphenoxy) acetyl]amino}pentanoyl}amino] propanoic acid (e.g. as free acid or
25 potassium salt), diuretics, e.g., amiloride; anticholinergics, e.g., ipratropium (e.g. as bromide), tiotropium, atropine or oxitropium; hormones, e.g., cortisone, hydrocortisone or prednisolone; xanthines, e.g., aminophylline, choline theophyllinate, lysine theophyllinate or theophylline; therapeutic proteins and
30 peptides, e.g., insulin or glucagon; vaccines, diagnostics, and gene therapies. It will be clear to a person skilled in the art that, where appropriate, the medicaments may

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be used in the form of salts, (e.g., as alkali metal or amine salts or as acid addition salts) or as esters (e.g., lower alkyl esters) or as solvates (e.g., hydrates) to optimise the activity and/or stability of the medicament.

- 5 Preferred components of the combinations comprise medicaments selected from albuterol, salmeterol, fluticasone propionate and beclomethasone dipropionate and salts or solvates thereof, e.g., the sulphate of albuterol and the xinafoate of salmeterol.
- 10 Preferred components of combinations of active ingredients contain salbutamol (e.g., as the free base or the sulphate salt) or salmeterol (e.g., as the xinafoate salt) or formoterol (eg as the fumarate salt) in combination with an anti-inflammatory steroid such as a beclomethasone ester (e.g., the dipropionate) or a fluticasone ester (e.g., the propionate) or budesonide. A particularly preferred combination of components
- 15 comprises fluticasone propionate and salmeterol, or a salt thereof (particularly the xinafoate salt). A further combination of components of particular interest is budesonide and formoterol (e.g. as the fumarate salt).

Generally, powdered medicament particles suitable for delivery to the bronchial or

20 alveolar region of the lung have an aerodynamic diameter of less than 10 micrometers, preferably less than 6 micrometers. Other sized particles may be used if delivery to other portions of the respiratory tract is desired, such as the nasal cavity, mouth or throat. The medicament may be delivered as pure drug, but more

appropriately, it is preferred that medicaments are delivered together with excipients

25 (carriers) which are suitable for inhalation. Suitable excipients include organic excipients such as polysaccharides (i.e. starch, cellulose and the like), lactose, glucose, mannitol, amino acids, and maltodextrins, and inorganic excipients such as calcium carbonate or sodium chloride. Lactose is a preferred excipient.

- 30 Particles of the powdered medicament and/or excipient may be produced by conventional techniques, for example by micronisation, milling or sieving.

Additionally, medicament and/or excipient powders may be engineered with particular densities, size ranges, or characteristics. Particles may comprise active agents, surfactants, wall forming materials, or other components considered desirable by those of ordinary skill.

5

The excipient may be included with the medicament via well-known methods, such as by admixing, co-precipitating and the like. Blends of excipients and drugs are typically formulated to allow the precise metering and dispersion of the blend into doses. A standard blend, for example, contains 13000 micrograms lactose mixed
10 with 50 micrograms drug, yielding an excipient to drug ratio of 260:1. Dosage blends with excipient to drug ratios of from 100:1 to 1:1 may be used. At very low ratios of excipient to drug, however, the drug dose reproducibility may become more variable.

It will be understood that the present disclosure is for the purpose of illustration only
15 and the invention extends to modifications, variations and improvements thereto.

The application of which this description and claims form part may be used as a basis for priority in respect of any subsequent application. The claims of such subsequent application may be directed to any feature or combination of features
20 described therein. They may take the form of product, method or use claims and may include, by way of example and without limitation, one or more of the following claims:

Claims

1. A medicament dispenser for use with plural elongate form medicament carriers, each having multiple distinct medicament dose portions carried thereby,
5 said dispenser having an internal mechanism for dispensing the distinct medicament dose portions carried by each of said plural medicament carriers, said mechanism comprising,
- a) receiving means for receiving each of the plural medicament carriers;
10
- b) release means for releasing a distinct medicament dose portion from each of the plural medicament carriers on receipt thereof by said receiving means;
- c) an outlet, positioned to be in communication with the distinct medicament
15 dose portions releasable by said release means; and
- d) indexing means for individually indexing the distinct medicament dose portions of each of the plural medicament carriers.
- 20 2. A medicament dispenser according to claim 1, wherein in combination, the distinct medicament dose portions releasable from each of the plural medicament carriers comprise defined doses of combination product.
-
3. A medicament dispenser according to either of claims 1 or 2, wherein the
25 plural elongate form medicament carriers are in the form of strips or tapes.
4. A medicament dispenser according to claim 3, wherein the plural elongate form medicament carriers are in the form of blister strips.

5. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein said receiving means comprises a single receiving station for receiving each of the plural medicament carriers.

5 6. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein said receiving means comprises plural distinct receiving stations, each for receiving a single medicament carrier.

7. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 4 to 6, wherein the
10 release means comprises means to rupture or otherwise access the blister strips.

8. A medicament dispenser according to claim 7, wherein the release means comprises means for peeling apart peelable blister strips.

15 9. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 8, wherein any or all components of the mechanism are driven by either an electronic or mechanical drive system or combination thereof.

10. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 9, wherein each of
20 the plural medicament carriers comprises a peelable blister strip having a plurality of pockets for containing medicament wherein said pockets are spaced along the length of and defined between two peelable sheets secured to each other.

11. A medicament dispenser according to claim 1, for use with plural blister strip
25 form medicament carriers, having multiple distinct pockets for containing medicament dose portions, wherein said pockets are spaced along the length of and defined between two peelable sheets secured to each other, said dispenser having an internal mechanism for dispensing the medicament dose portions contained within said plural medicament carriers, said mechanism comprising,

30

a) an opening station for receiving a pocket of each of said medicament carriers;

b) peeling means positioned to engage a base sheet and a lid sheet of a pocket which has been received in said opening station for peeling apart such a base sheet and lid sheet, to open such a pocket, said peeling means including lid driving means
5 for pulling apart a lid sheet and a base sheet of a pocket that has been received at said opening station;

c) an outlet, positioned to be in communication with an opened pocket through which a user can access a medicament dose portion from such an opened pocket;
10 and

d) indexing means for individually indexing the distinct pockets of each of the plural medicament carriers.

15 12. A medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 11 comprising,

a body;

a holder, shaped to fit within said body and movable relative to said body; and
20

receivable by said holder, said cassette containing said medicament carrier.

25 13. A medicament dispenser according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the plural medicament carriers carry medicament in powdered or solid form.

14. A medicament dispenser according to claim 13, wherein each of the plural medicament carriers carries a different medicament.

15. A medicament dispenser according to claim 14, wherein the different
30 medicaments, comprise the components of a combination medicament product.

16. A medicament dispenser according to either of claims 14 or 15, wherein the different medicaments are selected from the group consisting of albuterol, salmeterol, fluticasone propionate and beclomethasone dipropionate and salts or solvates thereof.

5

17. A medicament dispenser according to claim 16, wherein the different medicaments comprise salmeterol xinafoate and fluticasone propionate.

18. A kit of parts comprising a cassette according to any of claims 12 to 17; a
10 holder for said cassette; and a body, wherein the holder is shaped to fit within said body and is movable relative to said body.

19. A body and holder for use in the medicament dispenser according to any of claims 12 to 17.

15

20. A cassette for use in the medicament dispenser according to any of claims 12 to 17.

21. Use of a medicament dispenser according to any of claims 1 to 17 for
20 dispensing medicament.

Abstract

According to the invention there is provided a medicament dispenser for use with plural elongate form medicament carriers, each having multiple distinct medicament
5 dose portions carried thereby, the dispenser having an internal mechanism for dispensing the distinct medicament dose portions carried by each of the plural medicament carriers. The mechanism comprises a receiving station for receiving each of the plural medicament carriers; release means for releasing a distinct medicament dose portion from each of the plural medicament carriers on receipt
.10 thereof by the receiving station; an outlet, positioned to be in communication with the distinct medicament dose portions releasable by said release means; and indexing means for individually indexing the distinct medicament dose portions of each of the plural medicament carriers.

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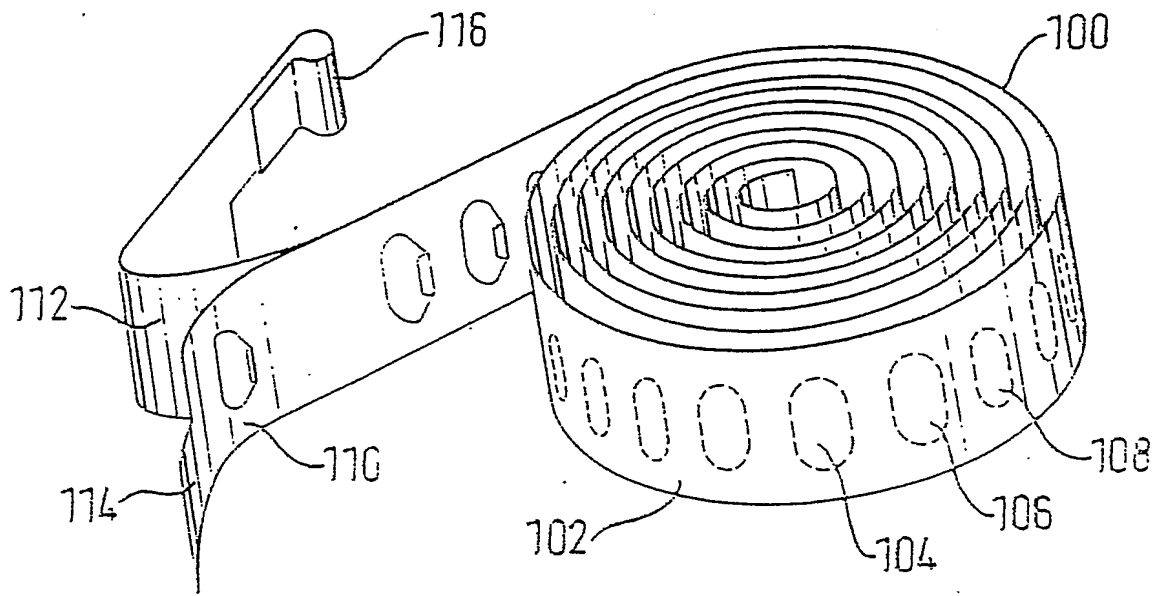


FIG. 1

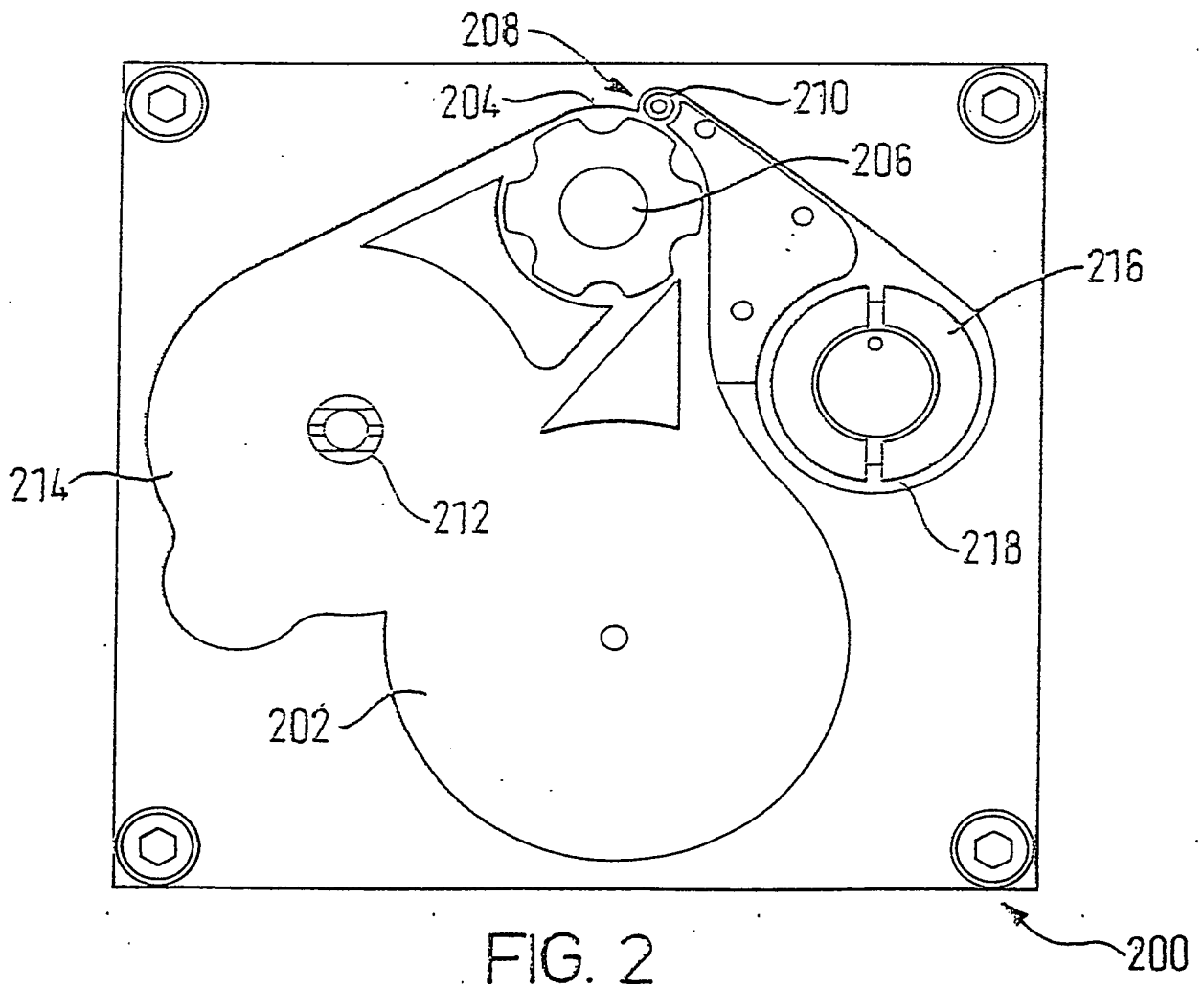


FIG. 2

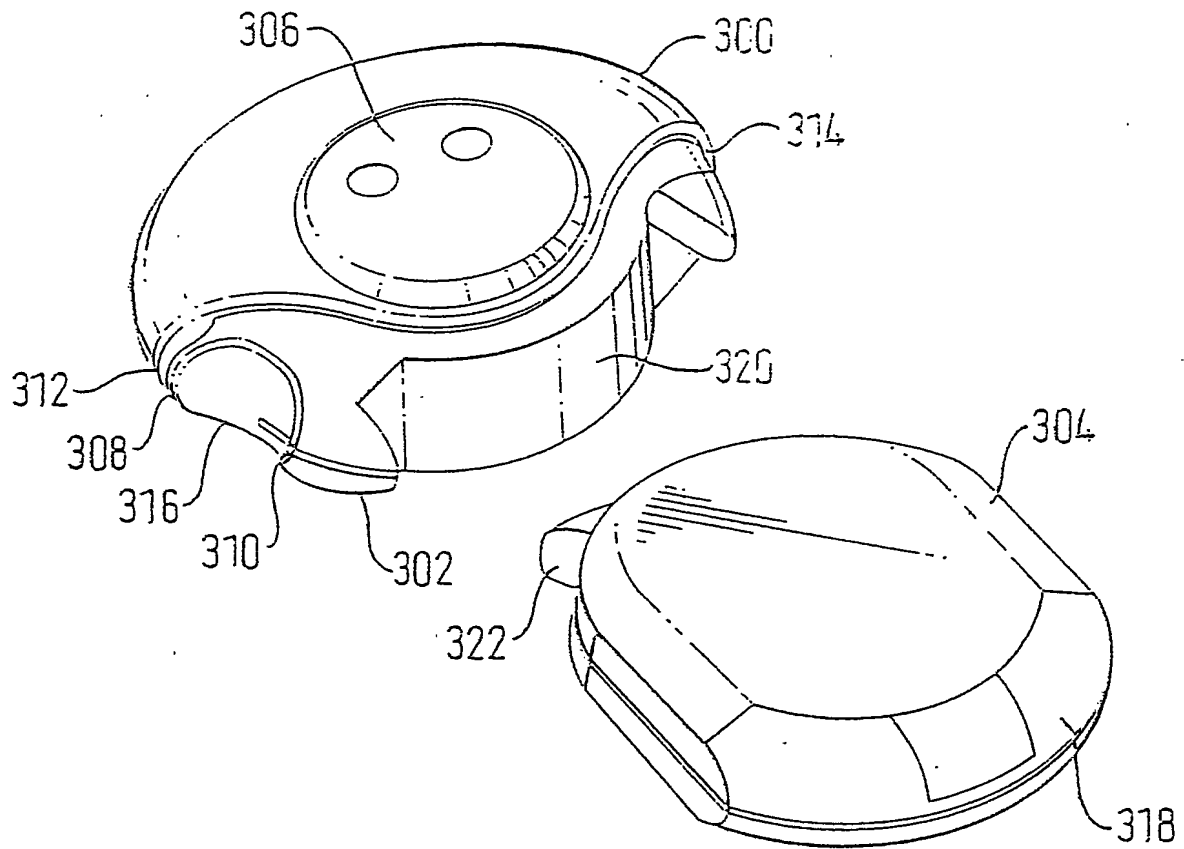


FIG. 3

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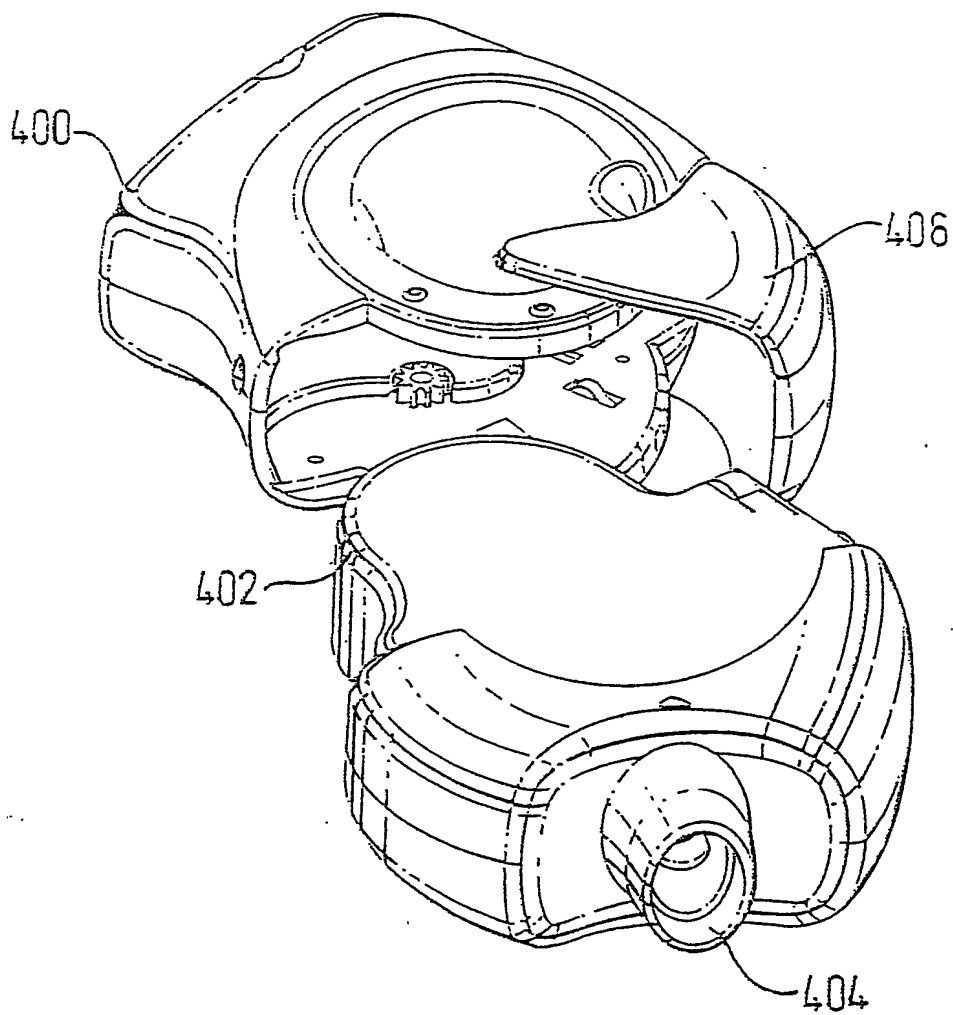


FIG. 4a

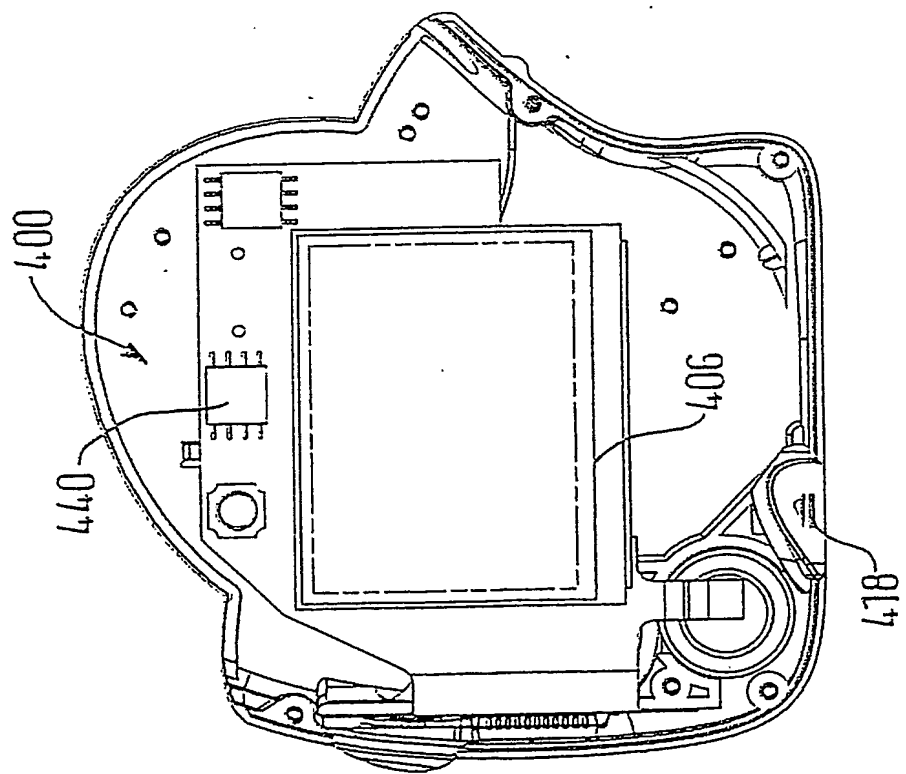


FIG. 4b

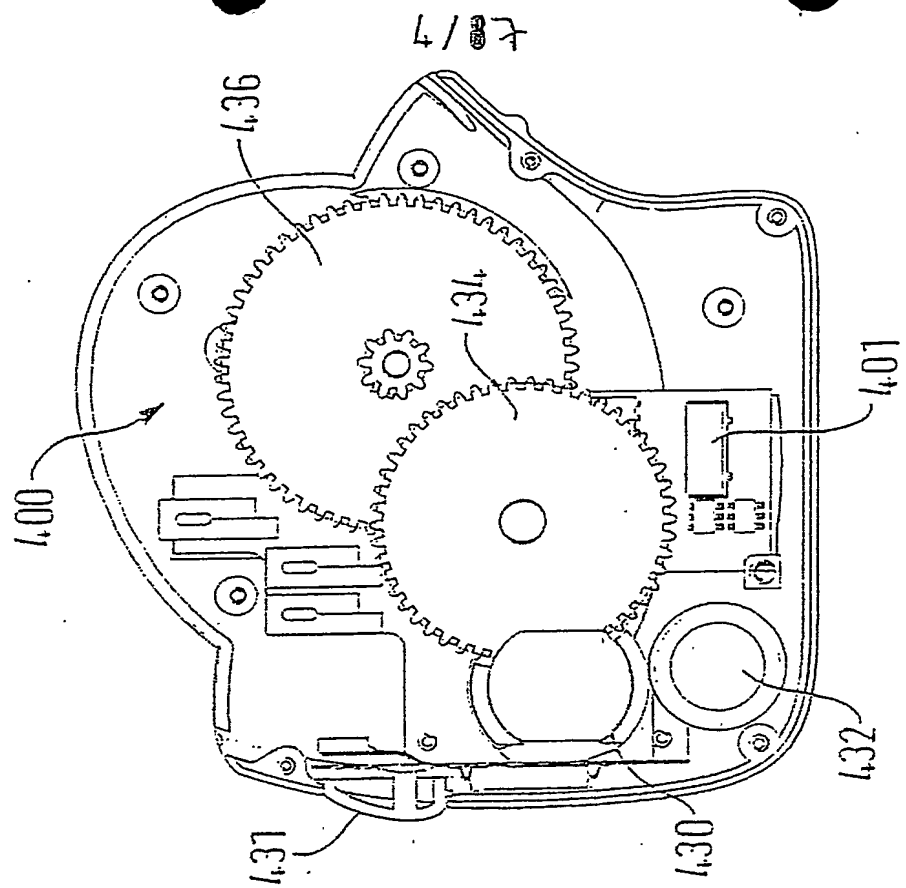


FIG. 4c

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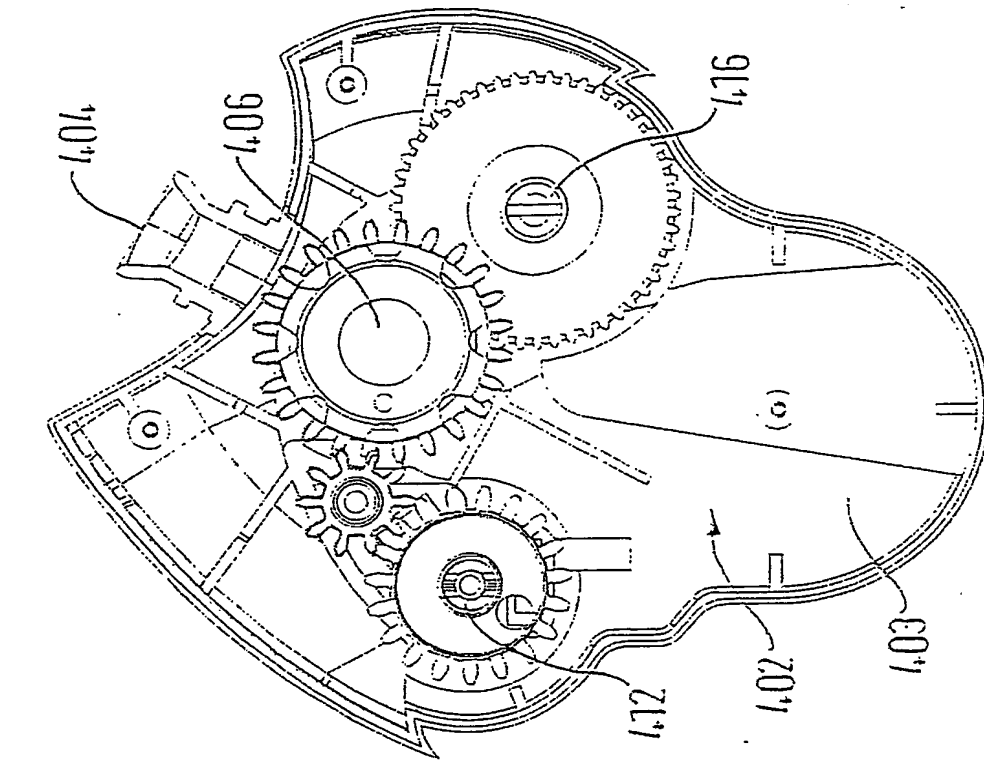


FIG. 4d

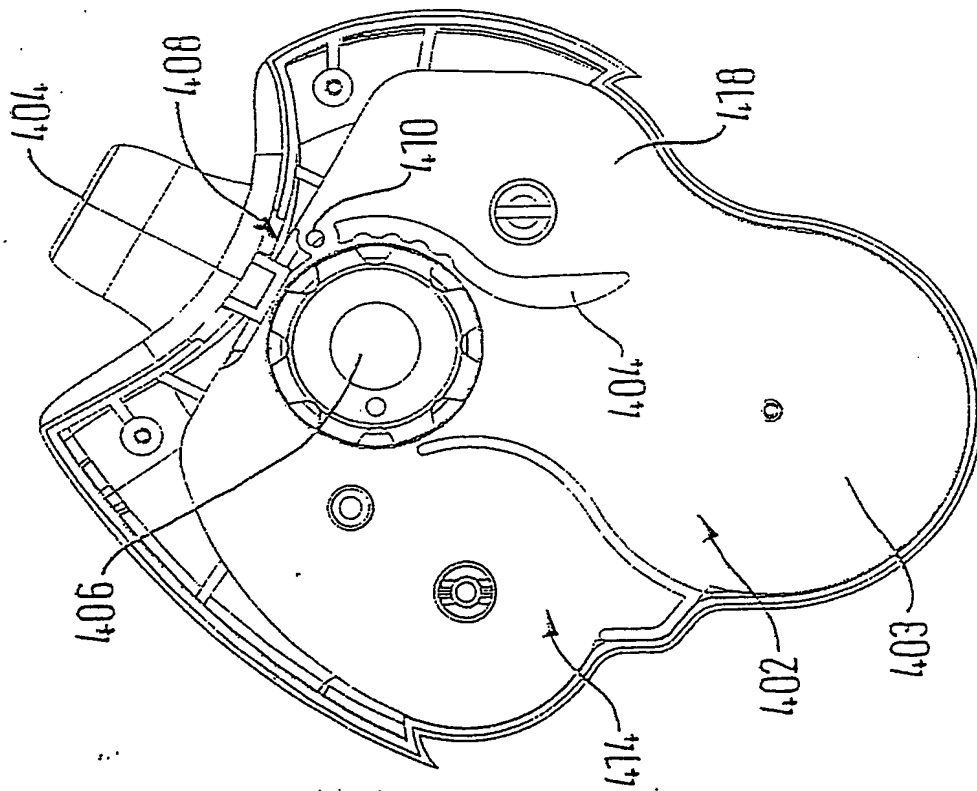


FIG. 4e

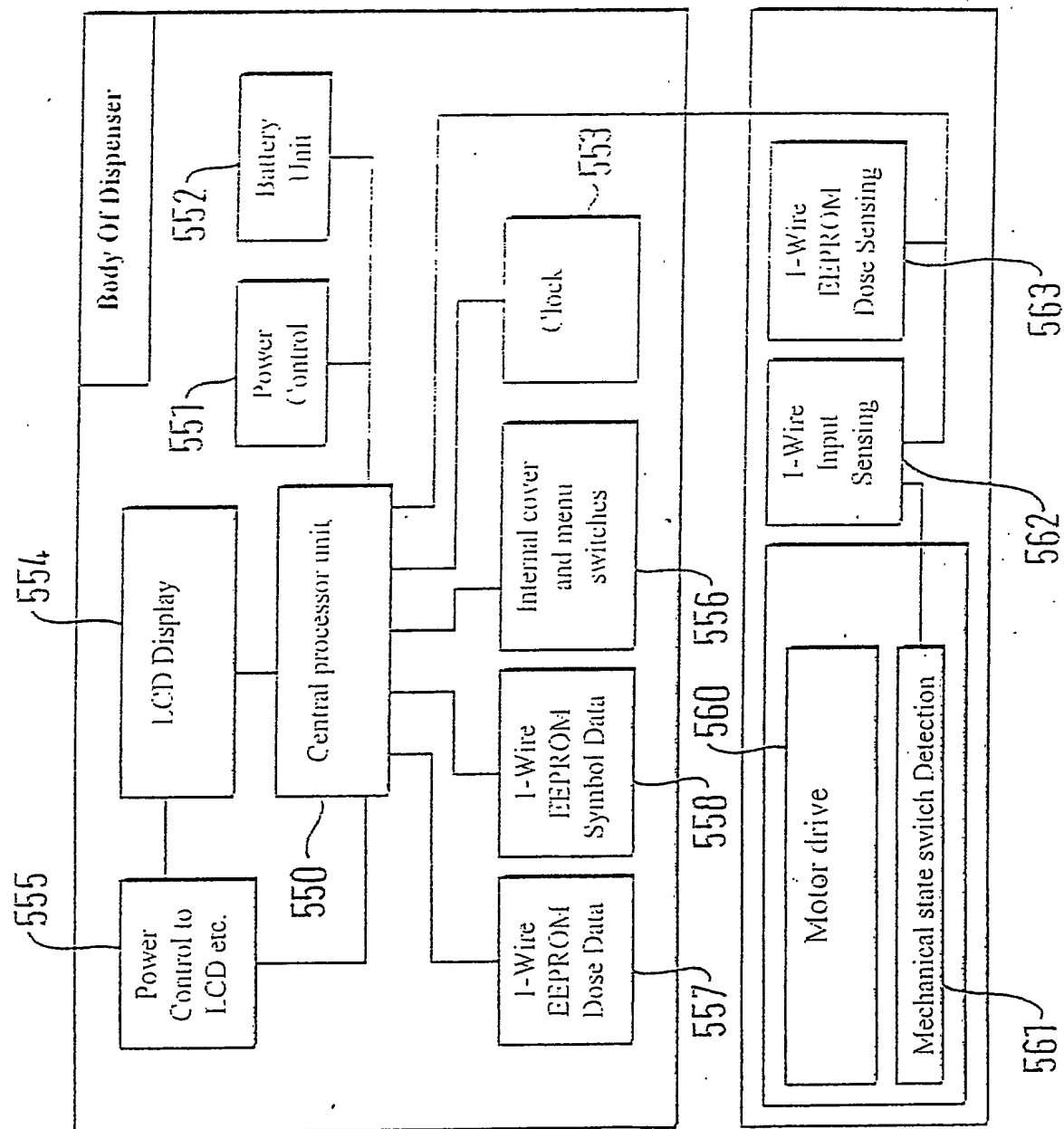
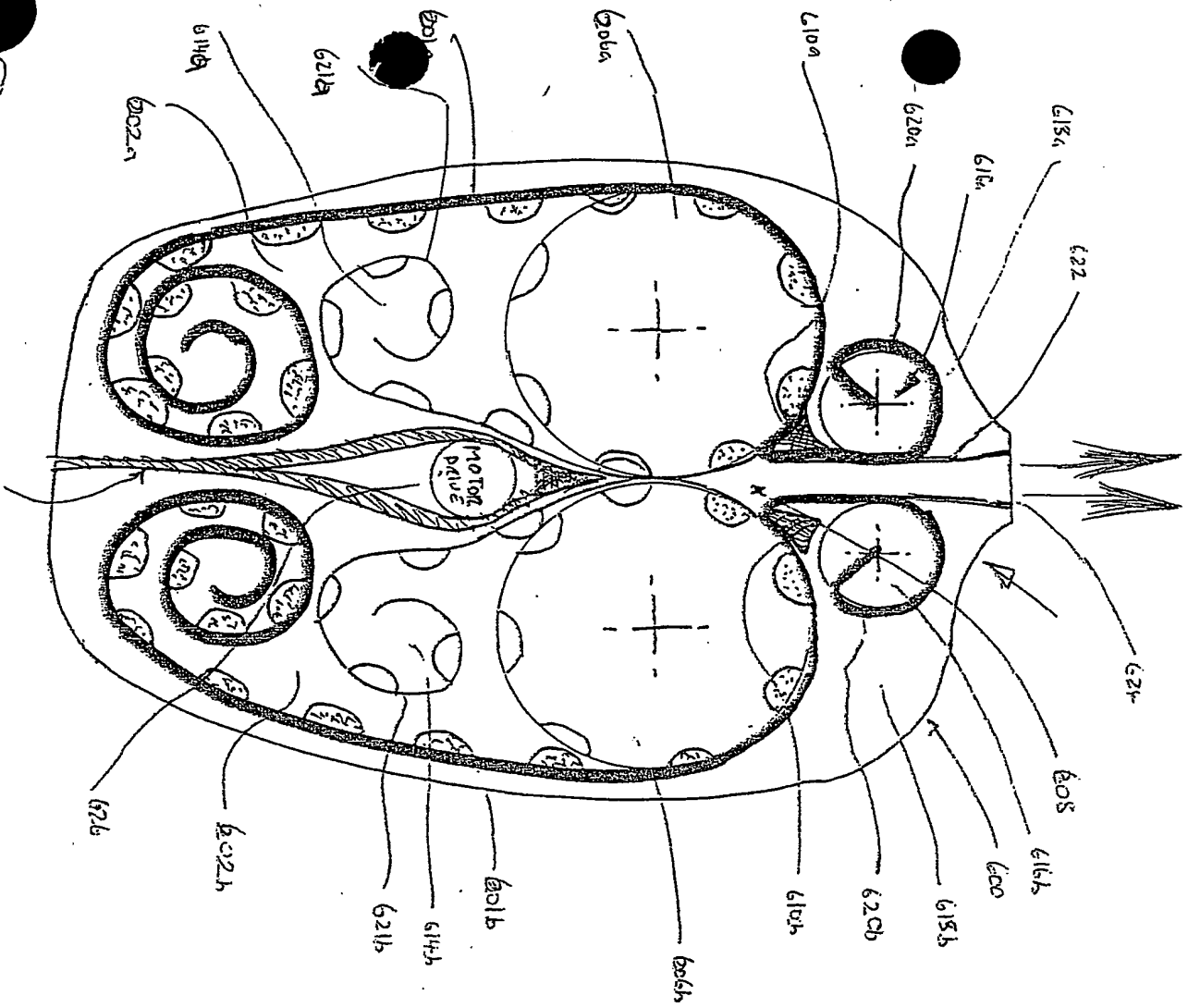
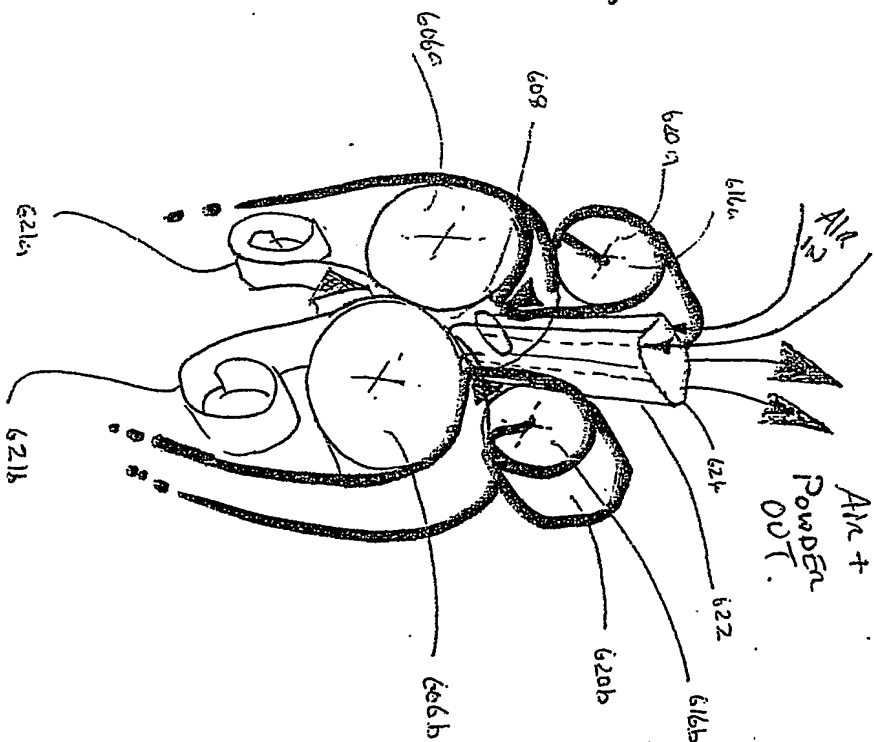


FIG. 5

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